‘See, acquire and target’

Debi Dawson, Strategic Communications Officer at the Program Executive Office (PEO) Soldier, discusses how the sensors and lasers are allowing soldiers to see in all conditions…

Armed with the latest in image intensification and other target acquisition technology, American soldiers have an edge in missions at night or in other low visibility situations.

Lt Col Jim Smith, who oversees the US Army’s programme that provides sensors and lasers, says that his products help soldiers to “see always, acquire first, and target once”, adding that American soldiers “own the night”. Smith is the Product Manager for sensors and lasers, which is part of Program Executive Office (PEO) Soldier. PEO Soldier designs, develops, buys, delivers and sustains virtually everything the American soldier wears or carries.

PEO Soldier’s sensors and lasers include helmet-mounted night vision devices that provide improved situational awareness in all conditions; thermal weapon sights that provide enhanced abilities to acquire targets in degraded visibility; and aiming lights and other devices that accurately locate targets.

Smith says these tools “enhance a soldier’s ability to acquire, pick out those objects of interest within that battle space and identify those [objects]”.

The AN/PVS-14 Monocular Night Vision Device (MNVD) is a helmet-mounted device used by the soldier to amplify ambient light. The system is designed for use in conjunction with rifle-mounted aiming lights. The lightweight (14 ounces) monocular design provides operational flexibility to leaders, allowing retention of optimised night vision in one eye. The AN/PVS-14 can also be mounted to the M16/M4 receiver rail.

The AN/PVS-10 Sniper Night Sight (SNS) enables the soldier to accurately acquire and engage targets using the M24 Sniper Weapon System at night to a range of 600 metres and during daylight to a range of 800 metres. SNS is a lightweight, weapon-mounted, image-intensified passive device designed primarily for use by the sniper in day and night operations. A day/night lever enables the user to alternate between day and night modes of operation. It includes a black line reticle for day use that is illuminated for night use when required.

Multifunctional Aiming Lights (MFAL) such as the ANPEQ-2A, ATPIAL, and DBAL-A2 are used in conjunction with night vision goggles to engage targets in low light conditions. When zeroed to the weapon, these devices provide an invisible continuous infrared beam along the weapon’s line of fire. A visible, red dot aiming laser can also be selected to provide accurate aiming of a weapon during daylight or night operations.

American soldiers use the AN/PVS-14 Monocular Night Vision Device (MNVD) in conjunction with rifle-mounted aiming lights to engage targets in low light conditions

The AN/PAS-13 Thermal Weapon Sight (TWS) family enables individual and crew served weapon gunners to see deep into the battlefield, increase surveillance and target acquisition range and penetrate obscurants, day or night. The TWS uses forward-looking infrared (FLIR) technology and provides a standard video output.

PEO Soldier always strives to improve current technologies and is never satisfied with the status quo. Program Executive Office Soldier Brigadier General R Mark Brown says that PEO Soldier is “constantly looking for the next best thing – whether it’s a technological advance or a relatively minor gear or clothing adjustment that will protect soldiers, save their lives, or just make their mission a little easier and more comfortable”.

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